

# Mallee Indigenous Participation Plan

## 2023-28



Australian Government

This publication is supported by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA), through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

**mallee**  
catchment management authority

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges and respects Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations. We recognise the diversity of their cultures and the deep connections they have with Victoria's lands and waters.

We value partnerships with them for the health of people and Country.

The Mallee CMA Board, management and staff pay their respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise the primacy of Traditional Owner obligations, rights, and responsibilities to use and care for their Traditional lands and waters.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is proud to play a leading role in the facilitation and implementation of Traditional Owner engagement in land and water management and planning in the Mallee region.

Mallee CMA recognise the importance of continually improving engagement activities and processes by focusing on supporting Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations to participate in meaningful ways to deliver positive outcomes in land and water management projects.

The renewal of the 2023-28 Mallee Indigenous Participation Plan (IPP), is a central part of our Cultural Competency Framework and Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). The renewal process shows our commitment and support for culturally appropriate, and effective engagement with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities and organisations in decision making, planning and the delivery of land and water management.

The Mallee IPP focuses on three key pillars: self-determination; relationships; and capacity building. The IPP strengthens the cultural competency of Mallee CMA through respectful and mutually beneficial engagements and relationships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal stakeholders.

The Mallee CMA Aboriginal Reference Group's (ARG's) role is strengthened through the implementation of the IPP. Key objectives and outcomes ensure continued improvement in our processes, project planning and delivery of land and water management, employment and education opportunities, and overall engagement strategies.

We acknowledge and appreciate the contribution of Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities, and Aboriginal organisations in the development and renewal of the Mallee IPP. The valuable input and feedback have influenced and shaped the development of Mallee IPP objectives and actions for land and water management.

The Mallee CMA Board and staff look forward to continuing to build relationships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations in the delivery of the 2023-28 Mallee IPP and land and water management projects.



**Allison McTaggart**  
**Mallee CMA Board Chair**  
2023

# Mallee Indigenous Participation Plan

## PURPOSE

The Mallee Indigenous Participation Plan (IPP) was first developed in 2016 and was the first of its kind in the Mallee region. The IPP was updated in 2020 after an extensive review to align with State and Commonwealth policies. To ensure its content and objectives are both contemporary and relevant, further revision to incorporate State and Commonwealth requirements has resulted in the 2023–28 Mallee IPP.

This Mallee IPP provides an opportunity for Traditional Owners and the wider Aboriginal community to inform and be involved in the delivery of land and water management projects, strategies, and activities. Through the development of objectives, outcomes, and actions the IPP provides a measurable and practical guide for Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to develop a framework for staff and management to deliver the plan.

The framework within the 2023-28 Mallee IPP provides realistic and achievable actions and activities to ensure strengthened and collaborative engagement between Traditional Owners and Mallee CMA. The framework also forms an important part of Mallee CMA's cultural competency and skill development for staff to further enhance relationships and make more informed decisions about land and water management within the Mallee region.

Traditional Owner aspirations for land and water management provides for an inclusive and transparent environment offering the ability to connect with Country, while guiding Mallee CMA projects, strategies, and activities with culturally appropriate approaches.

Mallee CMA's primary responsibility is to ensure natural resources in the region are managed in an integrated and ecologically sustainable way. Our work is based on science and delivered through meaningful partnerships with government agencies, local organisations (such as Landcare), Traditional Owners and community groups in the Victorian Mallee.





Picture 1: Neds Corner: On-Country 'Talking Water' visit



Picture 2: Merbein Common Catfish Billabong



## Mallee Catchment Management Authority - Catchment Area



## VISION

Mallee CMA's vision: Informed and active communities balancing the use of resources to generate wealth, with the protection and enhancement of our natural and cultural landscapes.

This IPP will align with Mallee CMA's vision through:

- Supporting connected and diverse communities creating trusted partnerships to support healthy landscapes
- Generating opportunities for lasting relationships; and
- Recognising the importance of genuine engagement with the Aboriginal community in land and water management.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Defining Community Engagement

We define 'communities' as including individuals, Traditional Owners, Aboriginal community and organisations, public and private landholders, community groups and business owners.

We define 'community engagement' as the activities which see us interact with members of our communities to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, or empower others (IAP2).

### Defining Partnerships

We define 'partners' as those community groups, organisations, local, state and federal governments, or individuals with whom we seek specific and mutually beneficial outcomes. As partners, we share issues and work collaboratively to provide the solution. Arrangements may be formal or informal.

### Creating a welcoming environment

All Board members, managers and staff play an important role in creating safe and welcoming environments by ensuring:

- Acknowledgement of Country signage on doorways
- Acknowledgement of Country at all Mallee CMA led meetings.

### Engaging with Aboriginal communities

It is essential to ensure a respectful and inclusive engagement process for establishing and maintaining relationships by:

- Engaging early in project planning
- Fostering effective and meaningful consultations and engagement
- Ensuring the precise and timely identification of needs
- Greater collaboration on working toward solutions.



## **Communications and relationships**

Communication skills remain central to creating a trusting and open environment through:

- Maintaining positive communication skills and attitudes
- Seeking feedback in ways which consider varying literacy levels and communication methods
- Ensuring our Board members, management and staff are familiar with local Aboriginal workers in the Natural Resource Management (NRM) field.

## **Developing Cultural Competence**

A person who is culturally competent communicates sensitively and effectively with people from a range of cultures, religions, ethnicities, ages, abilities, and sexualities by:

- Ensuring steps are taken to avoid imposing personal values and attitudes that may conflict with cultural norms for the individual, family, or community members
- Encouraging Board members, managers, and staff to participate in important Aboriginal events
- Ensuring Mallee CMA acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners of the land, and Indigenous Elders both past and present
- Inviting Indigenous Elders to give a Welcome to Country at the commencement of any major event.

## **Training**

Our Board members, management and staff all have an important role in creating safe and welcoming environments through:

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage training within induction programs for new staff and Board members
- The promotion of Board member, management and staff participation in cultural events and cultural awareness training as a recognised form of professional development
- Improved Board member, management and staff member understanding of relevant legislation, policies and guidelines related to discrimination and working with Aboriginal communities through online training.

## **OUR STARTING POINT**

Consultation and engagement undertaken to inform the 2023-28 Mallee IPP involved discussions with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and the wider Aboriginal Community. This level of consultation and engagement helps ensure the Mallee IPP reflects the needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal community regarding land and water management. The renewal process also provided opportunities to identify lessons learnt and to continually improve the Mallee IPP to enhance the Aboriginal community's involvement in the region's land and water management.

## Lessons Learnt

As part of the review process, key learnings were identified and incorporated in the 2023-28 Mallee IPP:

- Consultation must occur at project conception to ensure Traditional Owners are appropriately engaged from the beginning, and to avoid a tokenistic approach
- Travel time and distance must be considered when including Traditional Owners in On-Country visits and projects
- Limited understanding of water policy and governance requirements by Traditional Owners may restrict input on key projects; additional education would benefit both Traditional Owners and Mallee CMA
- A consistent engagement and implementation approach to help build trust and long-term relationships with Traditional Owners
- Establishing a feedback loop to show how Traditional Owner input has influenced land and water management planning and projects is vital for building and maintaining relationships.

## CONSULTATION PROCESS

Previous Mallee IPP outcomes and future expectations were carefully reviewed and incorporated into the 2023-28 Mallee IPP. Consultation included face-to-face engagement, On-Country visits, small group meetings including with the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) and information sessions with Traditional Owners. This consultation enabled priorities to be identified and captured in an environment where participants felt comfortable to share personal experiences and knowledge.

On-Country visits included discussions about potential environmental watering sites, how Traditional Owners can share knowledge with CMA staff and the Aboriginal community, aspirations for land and water management and the role Traditional Owners play in caring for Country.

Key discussions included: How Mallee CMA could best support Traditional Owners to be more involved in the delivery of land and water management projects; challenges faced by Traditional Owners in participating in Natural Resource Management and planning events, project planning; and ensuring the delivery of appropriate, respectful and recognised communication.

## LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Mallee CMA continues to fulfil its roles and responsibilities in enabling effective Aboriginal community participation in land and water management within the Mallee region, including:

- Responsibilities outlined in Australian and Victorian legislation and policy, including Traditional Owner agreements, Native Title, Aboriginal Heritage, the National Water Initiative, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the Catchment and Land Protection Act
- Commonwealth Government Indigenous Procurement Policy (2020)
- Current and future Traditional Owner settlements
- Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage
- The commitments within the Victorian Governments Aboriginal Affairs Framework, Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy and the Community Engagement and Partnerships Framework for Victorian CMAs
- Supporting the Australian Government's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The intentions and agreements set out in the CMA's Regional Catchment Strategies and other specific plans including Traditional Owner Country Plans and Joint Management Plans.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Mallee CMA region covers a large area of the catchment and incorporates 14 Traditional Owner groups spanning over 39,939 square kms. Traditional Owner rights and interests in the management and healing of Country is a core consideration in the application of partnership approaches to Natural Resource Management in the Mallee.

The region's rich and diverse Aboriginal culture and heritage has been formed through the historical and spiritual significance of sites and associated human occupation spanning thousands of years, together with the enduring connection Traditional Owners/First Peoples have with Mallee landscapes. The oldest dated Aboriginal heritage site in the Mallee region is located at Direl (Lake Tyrrell) with human activity recorded as far back as between 26,000 and 32,000 years ago, although use of the site was possibly as early as 45,000 years ago.

The Murray River and its associated lakes and waterways were important habitation areas for many Aboriginal groups as the abundance of food, water and shelter allowed for more permanent occupation. The high number of cultural sites throughout the Murray floodplain is unique in Victoria both for their concentration and diversity: including large numbers of burials, middens and hearth sites. In the south of the region freshwater lakes, streams and wetlands were focal points for Traditional Owners. Intangible Cultural Heritage is integral to these landscapes including the traditional knowledge, practice and expressions (e.g. biocultural knowledge, ceremonies, language dance, song, and stories) passed down from generation to generation. Natural elements of the landscape such as landforms, flora and fauna can also have particular significance to Traditional Owners.



Traditional Owner groups within the Mallee CMA service region included as part of the consultation and engagement in the development of the 2023-28 Mallee IPP review include (but are not limited to): Latji Latji Peoples; Wadi Wadi Peoples; Wemba Wemba Peoples; Tati Tati Peoples; Jari Jari Peoples; Nyeri Nyeri Peoples; Ngnintait Peoples; Ngarkat and Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation – Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Yupagalk and Wergaia.

The Mallee CMA service region has two Recognised Aboriginal Parties (RAPs):

- Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation; and
- First People of Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation.

As recognised through Native Title Determination (2005) and Recognition and Settlement Agreement / Traditional Owner Management Agreement (2022).

The diversity in Aboriginal representation across the region is also recognised, with input from broader stakeholders and partnership opportunities supported through community-based forums and reference groups.

### **Mallee CMA Aboriginal Reference Group**

Mallee CMA is committed to ensuring the Aboriginal community has a voice within the planning framework for land and water management and other business operations. The development of the Mallee CMA Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) in 2012-13 has formed a key component of community connection, relationship building and knowledge sharing. The ARG continues to form a vital part of the engagement process and has delivered benefits for the environment, cultural values and in the delivery of Mallee IPP commitments.

The ARG does not represent the views of all Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities, or Aboriginal organisations. It offers insight and feedback from a community perspective on land and water management and programs and monitors outcomes and actions through the 2023-28 Mallee IPP.

## ASPIRATIONS FOR LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Opportunities to advance First Peoples' aspirations were considered a high priority in developing the Mallee CMA RCS, Regional Land Partnerships (RLP) Action Plan and Mallee IPP. Key points and common themes raised at workshops, meetings and On-Country events with Traditional Owners/First Peoples that relate to RLP 5-year Outcomes and Investment Priorities (refer to Key Objectives, Outcomes and Activities section) are outlined below.

- Cultural Heritage protection is one key aspect of Integrated Catchment Management (ICM). First Nations communities' interests in participation and engagement in ICM and partnerships with CMAs and other organisations across this sector are much broader than Cultural Heritage protection alone.
- ICM can be a platform for activities that contribute to self-determination and nation-building by First Nations communities.
- Partnership-based activities have a direct benefit in themselves in terms of rehabilitating particular places, but these activities also have the broader impact of highlighting the role and responsibilities of First Nations peoples in managing Country, and contributing to health and wellbeing in community.
- Two-way learning and ongoing collaboration in planning and management is vital. Bridging knowledge through co-design (understanding and applying Indigenous and scientific knowledge) will help strengthen partnerships between First Nations peoples, landholders, community groups and other organisations; providing for better outcomes across the region.
- Opportunities to reconnect to Country are essential; reconnection can happen in lots of different ways and can mean different things to different people.
- It's important to recognise links between healthy Country and healing and wellbeing for First Nations peoples; including economic wellbeing.
- First Nations communities bring diverse life experiences and connections to these cultural landscapes and special places.
- First Nations peoples manage Country holistically to address multiple values and objectives, healing both Country and culture. It is important that ecosystems and parts of Country (both material and symbolic) are recognised as connected, not separate, cultural landscapes.
- The region's natural landscapes are fundamental to Country and the cultural identity of First Nations peoples. Caring for and healing Country with Traditional Ecological Knowledge and customs built over thousands of years of practice is integral to this connection.

This IPP recognises that valuing and supporting Traditional Owner/First Peoples leadership and expertise in caring for and healing Country can provide for ongoing ecological benefits and enhanced connections with Country. Opportunities for the application of Traditional Ecological Knowledge identified by Traditional Owners included:

- Reintroducing Traditional burning and other cultural healing practices
- Restoring native plant and animal communities
- Protecting species of cultural importance and returning them to the landscape
- Applying restorative farming practices
- Rehabilitating significant cultural sites
- Expanding Traditional languages knowledge and use creating educational and interpretive opportunities to share culture.

Mallee CMA has adopted practices to assist Traditional Owners with facilitating On-Country visits, project related programs such as e-watering events, Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) and Aboriginal Water Assessments (AWA's). This has enabled Mallee CMA to further strengthen relationships with Traditional Owners and the wider Aboriginal community.

## KEY OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES

The 2023-28 Mallee IPP has been updated in cooperation with Traditional Owner groups of the region, the Mallee CMA ARG, and members of the Aboriginal community. Mallee CMA has tested the ongoing suitability of existing objectives, outcomes, and activities, and developed new objectives, outcomes, and activities through this engagement process.

Consideration of Australian Governments five-year outcomes for the environment has been incorporated in the 2023-28 Mallee IPP, and forms an important framework for the engagement and partnerships with Traditional Owners.

### Five Year Outcomes for the Australian Government include:

**Species and Landscapes** - To mitigate new and established threats (such as feral pests and weeds) and restore habitat to support our international and domestic priorities, including the Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2023.

- Targeted Threatened Species (TS) are on track for improved trajectory.
- Species at high risk of imminent extinction are identified and supported to persist.
- The implementation of priority actions is leading to an improvement in the condition of targeted Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) and priority places.
- Priority species, TECs and places are being assisted to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity for climate change.
- Increased leadership and/or participation of First Nations people in the management and recovery of Threatened Species, TECs and priority places.

**Ramsar Wetland Protection** - To support conservation activities in wetlands recognised under the Ramsar Convention such as eradicating and managing invasive species.

Priority actions at targeted Ramsar Sites will reduce threats, restore or maintain ecological character and increase climate change resilience.

The critical components, processes and services of the wetland actively maintained and/or improved

- Increased leadership and/or participation of First Nations people in the management of threats to Ramsar Sites
- Adaptive management planning and actions are building resilience to extreme climate events
- Absence/reduction of non-native species
- Wetland biota and/or abundance is maintained and improved
- Hydrological regimes have been restored and maintained
- Improved condition of wetland vegetation/habitat
- Quality of breeding, foraging and roosting habitat is improved
- Increased leadership and/or participation of First Nations people in the restoration and/or maintenance of the ecological character of Ramsar Sites.



Mallee CMA continues to work with the Aboriginal community to further enhance and develop a strong understanding of Aboriginal community and Aboriginal organisational aspirations in land and water management for the Mallee region through:

- Traditional Owner Engagement Strategy (2021-24)
- Development of the Regional Land Partnerships Action Plan 2022-2028
- Development of Mallee CMA Regional Catchment Strategy 2022-2028
- Establishment of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group
- Renewal of the new Draft (Innovate) Mallee RAP (2023- 25)
- Annual reporting against RAP actions
- Development of the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project
- Development of the Victorian Mallee Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan (2020)
- Development of the Mallee Natural Resource Management Plan for Climate Change (2016)
- Implementation of the Mallee Waterway Strategy (2014-2022)
- Targeted engagement practices on projects, generation of investment opportunities and collaborative forums.

Principles and objectives established within the Cultural Competency Framework, updated IPP and Mallee Reconciliation Action Plan will continue to be integrated within Mallee CMA to support meaningful, culturally appropriate, and effective stakeholder engagement.

# Pillars of our Indigenous Participation Plan

## 1. SELF DETERMINATION

Mallee CMA supports: the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine their own political status; and to pursue their own economic, social, and cultural interests - self-determination encompasses both of these rights.

**Self-determination** is an 'ongoing process of choice' to ensure Aboriginal communities are able to meet their social, cultural and economic needs.




## 2. RELATIONSHIPS

Encourage and foster meaningful, long term relationships with the Aboriginal community. Long term relationships lie at the heart of who we are as an organisation and as a community. Mallee CMA works closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to build and maintain meaningful, on-going, long-term relationships.

## 3. CAPACITY BUILDING



Grow sustainable employment and participation opportunities for local Aboriginal people. Mallee CMA recognises the important role employment and training plays in boosting self-esteem, economic security and overall health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people, their families, and wider communities.




### Status metrics:

-  On-track
-  Requires additional attention
-  Requires immediate attention



## OUTCOME

INCREASE APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND ISSUES WITHIN OUR ORGANISATION WHILE EMPOWERING TRADITIONAL OWNERS TO MAKE DECISIONS AND SHAPE OUTCOMES IN LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE.

1. SELF-DETERMINATION / RECOGNITION / RESPECT						
	Aspirations	Key Objectives	Activities / Measures	Responsible	Timeframe	Status
1.	The Traditional Owners can self-determine when, and where land and water management occur.	The Traditional Owners have a voice in designing, delivering, and reporting on land and water management projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional Owners are given the opportunity to capture and share cultural values and knowledge with the Aboriginal Community.</li> <li>Mallee CMA supports relevant information sharing via platforms to disseminate information to Traditional Owners, encouraging discussions and questions relating to land and water management.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Board, ARG, Mallee CMA Staff	Ongoing	
2.	The Traditional Owners can pursue their own economic, social and cultural interests in relation to land and water management.	Support Traditional Owners in building capacity, encourage self-determination and knowledge sharing whilst creating economic opportunities. Supporting Australian Governments requirement of 4% of the value of work performed under the RLP Deed of Standing Offer and any Contracts will be subcontracted to Indigenous Enterprises over the initial Deed Period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of consultation and On-Country visits, guided tours and walks by Elders included to pass on important cultural knowledge and understanding.</li> <li>Ensure updated Victorian government and Australian Government Traditional Owner procurement policies and guidelines are incorporated into all relevant land and water management projects.</li> <li>Support the Aboriginal community to access cultural water through education, forums, workshops and governance practices.</li> <li>Integration within the Mallee CMA of the Australian Government Indigenous Procurement Policy.</li> <li>Development of procurement hub that provides access to information on Indigenous procurement. This will include use of free registries of Indigenous enterprises on sites such as <a href="http://supplynation.org.au">http://supplynation.org.au</a> and Office of the Registrar for Indigenous Corporations (ORIC).</li> <li>Provide opportunities for First Nations Enterprises to bid and subcontract for the delivery of works and services for Mallee CMA contracts (4% of the value of the Australian Governments RLP tender supply chain will be subcontracted to Indigenous Enterprises over the Initial RLP deed period).</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Board, Senior Management, Project Officers, Traditional Owners	Ongoing	

3.	Traditional Owner groups recognised as speaking for Country and respectful protocols followed.	Traditional Owner groups strong involvement in decision making for land and water management programs and projects of their Country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mallee CMA to develop and implement framework and policy for recognition of Traditional Owners.</li> <li>Traditional Owners and Mallee CMA develop relevant register for representatives who speak on behalf of the group/organisation.</li> <li>Mallee CMA to follow <i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i> in reference to legal rights in specific areas.</li> </ul>	ARG, Mallee CMA Senior Management, Project Officers All Mallee CMA and Board	Ongoing June 2023	
4.	Recognition and acknowledgement of cultural values and participation in land and water management projects.	Integration of protocols, cultural values and Traditional Owners in land and water management project development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mallee CMA to ensure diversity of staff relating to both men's and women's business On-Country can be shared appropriately.</li> </ul>	ARG, Mallee CMA Senior Management, Project Officers	Ongoing	
5.	Respect and recognition for Aboriginal people as partners in land and water management.	Build on partnerships with Traditional Owners and related organisations to ensure input is recognised and contributions valued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pull up banners, newsletters, website branding and other printed materials recognises Mallee CMA is a culturally respectful organisation.</li> <li>ARG committee members identified and promoted as committee members through publications such as website.</li> <li>ARG logo to appear in Mallee CMA publications, foyer signage and website where appropriate.</li> <li>Create opportunities to work together through shared learning, meaningful engagement activities and formal assessments (AWA's/CHMPs').</li> <li>Ensure all staff and contractors follow the compliance checklist in Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs') and Aboriginal Water Assessments (AWA's)</li> <li>Ongoing participation in NAIDOC events each year through the awarding of the Ralph Harradine Award.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Board, ARG	Ongoing	








6.	Recognition and acknowledgement of connection to Country.	<p>Relevant Traditional Owner group to perform Welcome to Country where possible.</p> <p>Mallee CMA staff and contractors understand and deliver the Mallee CMA Acknowledgement of Country appropriately and respectfully.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protocols for Acknowledgement of Country developed for use by staff, contractors, and visitors.</li> <li>• Signage appropriately identifies the use of Acknowledgement of Country within the Mallee CMA buildings and entrances.</li> <li>• Mallee CMA provides opportunities for Traditional Owners to educate the community through the Acknowledgement of Country.</li> <li>• Protocols and information sessions developed relating to the use of Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country for Aboriginal Community, Mallee CMA staff and contractors.</li> <li>• Traditional Owners are able to provide a Welcome / Acknowledgement of Country at Mallee CMA events, meetings and gatherings (with appropriate understanding and training if required).</li> <li>• Mallee CMA Acknowledgement of Country respectfully and appropriately recognises the traditional lands where the meeting is held and the Elders within the meeting/gathering.</li> <li>• An easily understood map outlining the appropriate use of the Acknowledgment of Country – relating to the relevant townships.</li> </ul>	ARG Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers	Ongoing	
7.	Clearly identify and acknowledge the various Aboriginal tribal and/or language groups, their interests, responsibilities and relationships to land and water.	Clearly identify and acknowledge the various Aboriginal tribal and/or language groups, their interests, responsibilities and relationships to land and water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Mallee IPP to reflect Traditional Owner groups of the region, along with status of Native Title and Registered Aboriginal Party claims. Include appropriate maps/spatial representations.</li> <li>• Draw on existing relationships with Traditional Owner groups and recently completed Aboriginal Water Assessments (AWAs) to ensure the Mallee IPP accurately reflects groups' interests, responsibilities and relationships to land and water in the Victorian Mallee.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Senior Management, Project Officers	Ongoing	

## OUTCOME

BUILD RESPECTFUL CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES.

### 2. RELATIONSHIP / RECOGNITION / RESPECT




	Aspirations	Key Objectives	Activities / Measures	Responsible	Timeframe	Status
1.	Traditional Owner groups are acknowledged for their connection to Country and recognise their aspirations to speak for Country.	Traditional Owner involvement in project planning and decision making fostering a strong connection and ownership of land and water management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings (quarterly /annually) with Traditional Owners to offer information and outline proposed projects for the next year and how it aligns with funding opportunities watering events and proposed submissions.</li> <li>Meetings delivered both On-Country and office based to ensure best outcomes and information flow.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Senior Management and staff	Annually	
2.	Following of all appropriate protocols and agreements in engagement processes.	Close the loop engagement practices to ensure cultural knowledge is recognised and used appropriately and timely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A combination of both On-Country and office-based meetings/training, before during and after projects.</li> <li>Ensure protocols are reviewed and updated annually.</li> <li>Promotion internally to all Mallee CMA staff of protocols through staff correspondence, intranet, newsletters, toolbox meetings and staff meetings.</li> <li>Ensure partner organization MOU's and contracts include protocols.</li> <li>Review, amend and implement the cultural heritage compliance policy and procedures annually.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Senior Management and Project Officers	Ongoing	
3.	Clear and consistent communication with Traditional Owner's, Aboriginal organisations and the Aboriginal community.	Build trust and transparent relationships to ensure strong ongoing communication relating to land and water management practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure Engagement Register is kept relevant and updated.</li> <li>Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Community protocols developed.</li> <li>Simple, easy to understand overview flyers of presentations, available for distribution to the Aboriginal community by the ARG and other related organisations (upfront and transparent about what is and is not negotiable as part of the project).</li> <li>Development of Mallee CMA Language Guide to ensure all project and related engagement is clear and easily understood and delivered.</li> <li>Information is provided in various formats including written, presentation, social media, website, face-to-face, On-Country etc.</li> <li>Mallee CMA Community Engagement and Partnerships Policy /strategy developed.</li> <li>Establish consultation feedback loop as part of the consultation process.</li> </ul>	ARG Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers All Staff	Ongoing	

4.	Effective and informed Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG).	A supported ARG which fosters strong relationships within the community and provides key connections with the Aboriginal community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources continue to be provided to support the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) with the provision of sitting fees, travel arrangements.</li> <li>Resources and collateral provided to ARG to support community engagement and consultation.</li> <li>Continue with annual reviews of the ARG structure, outcomes, and feedback.</li> <li>Review of Terms of Reference to ensure consistency with Government regulations and other similar community advisory groups.</li> <li>Build a strong profile in the community through foyer signage, website acknowledgement &amp; promotion of the ARG.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers	Ongoing	
5.	Strong relationships and partnerships with related agencies.	Consistent and coordinated relationships established with related key agencies to avoid duplications and effective conversations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A central calendar of events, meetings, workshops, projects, and potential opportunities developed and available for relevant Traditional Owners groups to ensure attendance and allocation of appropriate Traditional Owner.</li> </ul>	Related key agencies Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers All Mallee CMA & Board	Ongoing	





## OUTCOME


4% OF THE MALLEE CMA FULL TIME EQUIVALENT AUSTRALIAN BASED WORKFORCE WILL BE FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

### 3. CAPACITY BUILDING / TRAINING / LEARNING

	Aspirations	Key Objectives	Actions / Measures	Responsible	Timeframe	Status
1.	Mentoring and training opportunities for Traditional Owners	Relevant and consistent skillset creation for Traditional Owners to assist with future procurement opportunities, governance, and project implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training programs for Traditional Owners to better understand government legislations, regulations and protocols relating to project bids, watering programs and project governance.</li> <li>• Mentoring programs developed to ensure Elders knowledge can be passed down to the younger generation.</li> <li>• Mallee CMA supports Elders and Indigenous people to participate in delivery of training, workshops, forums through resources, travel / transport, and related support.</li> <li>• Facilitate and support ongoing training delivered for young Indigenous people to build capacity, support career development and upskill.</li> <li>• Mallee CMA to support the Aboriginal community through traineeships and seek funding annually to deliver traditional community activities and workshops.</li> </ul>	All Mallee CMA and Board	Ongoing	
2.	Respectful, appropriate, and considered training for all Mallee CMA staff and contractors.	Mallee CMA staff and contractors have a clear understanding of the Aboriginal communities' expectations and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff, Board, and contractors complete relevant Cultural Competence Awareness course and refresher (as required).</li> <li>• Ensure partner organisations follow protocols and complete cultural inductions.</li> <li>• Traditional Owner involvement in delivery of cultural awareness training.</li> <li>• Senior Mallee CMA staff and Project Managers to be involved in Traditional Owner forums, discussions, workshops.</li> <li>• Continue to periodically deliver cultural heritage inductions for all contractors working with Mallee CMA.</li> </ul>	Related key agencies Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers All Mallee CMA & Board	Ongoing	
3.	Leadership and governance roles identified for aboriginal people on Boards and Committees.	Leadership roles for aboriginal people through Board appointments, senior roles, and advocacy committees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised Mallee CMA positions identified for Aboriginal community.</li> <li>• Promotion and awareness of the ARG and recruitment for future members.</li> <li>• The Aboriginal community is involved in the identified recruitment processes for Mallee CMA</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Board and Senior Management ARG Project Officers	Ongoing	



4.	Building the capacity of Traditional Owner groups.	To build knowledge, expertise and understanding in cultural values for Traditional Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-meeting visit or workshop material and flyers provided to Traditional Owners where possible to ensure preparation and understanding of requirements on the day.</li> <li>• Forum and information sessions to occur annually about river operations, outlook, and allocation information (in conjunction with related agencies – MDBA, LMW, EWH etc).</li> <li>• Mallee CMA to partner with the Aboriginal community to deliver collaborative projects such as community art, basket weaving workshops, traditional food information sessions etc.</li> <li>• Mallee CMA to continue to be involved in on-ground projects with Traditional Owners.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers Related key agencies	Ongoing	
5.	Increased numbers of Aboriginal people working, learning, and training On-Country.	Increase the number of aboriginal people employed in land and water management at Mallee CMA, providing positive outcomes for the whole community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mallee CMA to provide assistance through travel and accommodation when and if appropriate for Traditional Owners to attend relevant training, workshops, and meetings.</li> <li>• Ensure Traditional Owners are involved in the planning and delivery of project planning and consultation.</li> <li>• Enable Mallee CMA Indigenous staff members to obtain a diverse range of skills in a wide range of areas within the land and water management field through job-share arrangements, site visits, shadowing senior staff, mentoring and field visits.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers Mallee CMA Board	Ongoing	
6.	Increase Traditional Owners participation in the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBA) and understanding of Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration (VMFRP) and constraints projects.	Creation of opportunities through economic benefits, On-Country learning, and key project outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for Traditional Owners participation and input into MDBA Plan through VMFRP) and Constraints projects through forum attendance, site visits, inductions, inspections, AWA's and CHMPs.</li> </ul>	Project Officers Related key agencies	Ongoing	
7.	Seek funding to further enhance Traditional practices, education programs and employment and training.	Economic opportunities created for Traditional Owners to build capacity, social enterprise, project capacity and employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly seek funding with Traditional Owner groups and organisations to deliver education programs for youth / students on cultural heritage and values.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to successfully bid to deliver projects and services for Mallee CMA.</li> </ul>	Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers Related key agencies	Annually	

8.	Consider roles, responsibilities, and capacity of the Indigenous community to contribute to regional NRM priorities (e.g. RLP 5-year Outcomes), particularly where they align with Aboriginal people's land and water management aspirations.	Consideration and alignment with the RLP 5-year Outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with ARG to workshop strategies to identify opportunities for Indigenous community to contribute to 5-year outcomes in land and water management, through engagement, project delivery and MERI activities.</li> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners and community partners to update/identify regional natural resource management priorities, particularly where they align with Aboriginal community aspirations and objectives.</li> </ul>	ARG Mallee CMA Senior Management Project Officers	Ongoing	
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## HOW THE IPP WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

Mallee CMA will implement the 2023-28 Mallee IPP through collaborative, inclusive and ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities, and partner organisations with an interest in land and water management.

Aboriginal Participation Guidelines developed specifically for Victorian CMAs provide key principles and actions for CMA's and align with the IPP objectives and goals.

The 2023-28 Mallee IPP serves as a practical guide for Mallee CMA to partner with, and involve Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities, individuals and organisations in the planning, consultation and implementation of land and water management investment. The IPP has been developed with the clear understanding that Traditional Owner Groups are the custodians of the land, and their knowledge and expertise is highly valued.

The development and implementation of the Mallee IPP is regarded by Mallee CMA as a practical action that illustrates the organisation's acknowledgement of the importance of genuine and lasting partnerships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations in order to work together to appropriately plan and manage our catchment.

## TARGETS AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Progress will be reviewed quarterly against specific project timeframes and overall Aboriginal employment, training, and consultation targets.

Success will be measured against the following indicators:

- Number of employees who identify as First Nations people placed permanently within Mallee CMA and partners
- Number of employees who identify as First Nations people placed into apprenticeships or traineeships
- Employee Retention rates
- Increased First Nations people supplier usage and implementation of updated government procurement policy
- Increased cultural awareness levels amongst staff, contractors, and partners (measured by annual survey)
- Number of Traditional Owners involved in land and water management projects (through AWA's/ CHMP's)
- Number of Traditional Owners completing relevant Cultural Heritage training and certification
- Engagement register – interactions with Traditional Owners through consultation, training, workshops, and meetings.
- Active participation and attendance of the ARG.

## REVIEW PERIOD

Targets and actions will be reviewed annually to ensure the 2023-28 Indigenous Participation Plan continues to deliver on State and Commonwealth priorities.

## REVIEW AND EVALUATION – LEARNINGS & SUCCESS

Key evaluation questions		YES / NO	How? Provide evidence
1.	Are we increasing awareness and recognition of Aboriginal peoples' interests in our work?		
2.	Are we meeting our legal obligations regarding Aboriginal participation?		
3.	Are we establishing and following protocols to ensure the free, prior, and informed consent of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community for projects that affect their rights and interests?		
4.	Are we inducting and training Board members, staff and contractors in ways that help build cultural competency?		
5.	Are we providing supportive workplace arrangements for staff and contractors as they engage with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities, including appropriate resourcing and time for project and program delivery?		
6.	Are we engaging meaningfully and are we building trust and mutual respect with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities?		
7.	Are we respecting Aboriginal people's culture, knowledge, and obligations to Country through our work?		
8.	Are Aboriginal people more actively represented in our decision-making processes?		
9.	Are Aboriginal communities and organisations participating in our projects and programs?		
10.	Are we supporting Aboriginal groups in their pursuit of economic opportunities and jobs in land and water management?		
11.	Are we supporting initiatives that contribute to health and wellbeing, and closing the gap of disadvantage?		

## REFERENCES

- Draft (Innovate) Mallee Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) (2023-25)
- Mallee CMA Cultural Competency Framework
- Aboriginal Participation Guideline for Victorian Catchment Management Authorities (2016)
- Community Engagement and Partnership Framework and Toolkit for Victorian CMAs (2017)
- Mallee CMA Diversity and Inclusion Plan (2017)
- Gender Equality Policy
- Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project Traditional Owner Engagement Strategy (2021-24).
- Commonwealth Government Indigenous Procurement Policy (2020)



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